

AB 599 Public Advisory Committee

Doubletree Hotel
2001 Point West Way
Sacramento, California

Meeting Summary

Tuesday, April 9, 2002

Convene Meeting

The meeting began at 9:40 a.m. Members of the PAC, staff and the public introduced themselves.

Review Agenda and Approve February 27 Meeting Summary

Steve Ekstrom, PAC facilitator, described the plan for the day. The meeting summary for February 27, 2002 was approved as mailed by consensus.

Groundwater Databases

Dr. Anne Happel of EcoInteractive gave a presentation on databases with emphasis on the GeoTracker database system. Topics covered were:

- Current status of State agencies groundwater data
- Regulatory/compliance data bases
- Why is integrated access important?
- Challenges
- What is the GeoTracker solution?
 - GeoTracker approach
 - Solution design
 - Integrates data from multiple programs and agencies
 - Case management
 - Integrated access
 - GeoTracker uses statistics
 - 24/7 access
 - Expected benefits
- Other states' systems

PAC members had several questions and comments:

- Can GeoTracker be used for the AB599 project? Response: yes, it's an option; and the risk is lower than developing a "from-scratch" system.
- What are the limiting factors? Response: none; it's very scalable.
- Can it manage current monitoring needs? Response: no, because there's limited data in the system now.

- What's needed to make GeoTracker usable for the AB599 project? Response: access to all data and good data quality.
- What's the annual cost to maintain GeoTracker? Response: approximately \$200,000 annually.
- It would be good to hear from agencies, e.g., county environmental health programs, that have used GeoTracker: what's been their experience?
- Perhaps we could run a pilot program that interprets USGS and DHS data.
- Whatever system we adopt must have cross-check capability.
- It should also be able to examine legacy data.
- How much would it cost to develop a GeoTracker program for the AB599 project? Response: approximately \$1.2 million, plus approximately \$700,000 for data acquisition and clean-up.
- We need to know what we need from the data, and how we want it to flow.
- How much data is produced by each agency participating in AB599, and how much is in usable form? Response: SWRCB data (UST and SLIC sites, Groundwater Ambient Monitoring and Assessment Program data); DHS data (public wells); and DWR data (groundwater basins)

Other databases discussed were ScoreCard and EnviroMapper. The PAC asked that information on these programs be made available to them.

Public Comment

Members of the public were asked if they had any comments. These included:

- Remember, the legislature wants to know how much of California's groundwater is contaminated.
- We should be asking what other state agency needs are as well as local government, and other stakeholders.
- We need basin-wide data analysis tools.
- Given the "ocean of data" that exists, how do we create a happy medium between getting the right data and assuring the quality of that data.

Overview of State Groundwater Programs, Data and Data Gaps

Angela Schroeter reviewed the three handouts supplied in advance to the PAC. These were, 1) a description of each participating agency's objectives, including the number of PYs budgeted and the annual budget for groundwater monitoring and assessment; 2) a description of the data collected by each agency; and 3) each agency's description of their perceived data gaps.

Regarding data gaps, the agencies, if given the option, would collect more data, manage data better, and share data more.

Comments from the PAC included:

- We need the ability to assess overall groundwater quality
- It would be good to compare resources allocated to groundwater monitoring to other water quality programs, like the surface water programs.
- We need to address jurisdictional coordination in the Report to the Legislature.

- Have we defined “comprehensive evaluation? Response: no, we hope to do that with this program.
- How much of each agency’s allocation to groundwater monitoring is spent on information management? Response: this could be difficult to ascertain as a PY is often not 100% dedicated to groundwater monitoring. The ITF will look into this.
- Is data collected by other responsible parties authorized by state agencies? Response: yes, much of it is (Example: Local agencies collect data on USTs).

Groundwater Monitoring Definitions

Steve Ekstrom suggested in the interest of time that PAC members review the document previously mailed out (ITEM 3 in the packet) and email any questions or comments to Angela. Angela will collect these and mail them back out to the PAC.

Questions to Address in a Comprehensive Groundwater Monitoring Program

Steve Ekstrom explained that in response to PAC’s request from the last meeting, the ITF had developed a “brainstormed” list of categorized questions that a comprehensive groundwater monitoring program should address. Again, in the interest of time, Steve suggested that PAC members review the questions previously mailed out (ITEM 4 in the packet) and email any questions or comments to Angela. Angela will collect these and mail them back out to the PAC.

Comprehensive Groundwater Monitoring Program

Dr. Kenneth Belitz with the USGS gave a presentation on “the ideal” groundwater monitoring program, as requested by the PAC at its last meeting. Ken stated that it’s virtually impossible to describe the ideal program, and therefore presented various perspectives and questions that should be considered in developing the ideal. His presentation included the following questions:

- What does the ideal program achieve?
- What are the components of a monitoring program?
 - What are the criteria for well selection?
 - What chemical analyses might be appropriate?
 - How often should wells be sampled?
 - What should the database provide for monitoring to be successful?
 - What are some key interpretive results to be provided from a monitoring program?
- Resources available to us and existing resources
 - Where are available wells? What chemical data is collected and how can the data be used?
 - What hydro-geological data is available that could be incorporated into the monitoring program?

Ken then presented two different case studies, the Santa Ana NAWQA study and the SWRCB CAS study.

Ken’s concluding remarks included:

- A hydrogeological understanding provides a basis for interpreting data.
- Consistency facilitates interpretation.

- Spatially-referenced, digital data is critical.
- Anthropogenic compounds are useful as tracers.

Questions and comments from PAC included:

- What was the cost of each case study? Response: approximately \$120,000.
- The USGS case studies are good programs that have good interpretative data.
- Whatever we do should have an early warning system built in.
- The USGS approach doesn't capture domestic wells – these need to be included.
- Hydrogeological data is critical.
- We can't overlook disadvantaged communities - we need to be attentive to environmental justice issues.
- What is it we're really trying to accomplish?
 - A data warehouse that is accessible to various interests?
 - Analysis of private wells?
 - A planning tool for land use planning?
 - Early warning and remediation?
 - Data that's available to the public?

This last question about what we're trying to accomplish triggered a lengthy discussion about the larger goals of the AB599 program and an expressed need for the PAC to dig into the issues. PAC felt they had received ample background information (presentations, packets of information, etc.) and that it was important now for the ITF to bring things to focus by asking the PAC to respond to specific ideas, suggestions and recommendations. The idea of using the next few meetings as opportunities for "mini-workshops" was raised and endorsed.

At the next meeting it was agreed we should have workshop-type sessions on at least the overall goals of the program, components of an ideal monitoring program, databases, and data gaps. The ITF was encouraged to take positions on these topics as a way to focus the PAC's discussion.

Proposed Outline for the Comprehensive Groundwater Monitoring Report to the Legislature

The proposed outline was ITEM 6 in the packet of information previously mailed out to the PAC. It is included in the project workplan that was distributed and will be considered at the May 29, 2002 meeting.

Establish Next PAC Meeting Agenda

In addition to holding "workshops" on the four topics, the PAC will also be asked to approve a work plan for the project (a draft was distributed at this meeting). The work plan will be sent out in advance of the May meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 29, 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in Sacramento.

Public Comment

Members of the public were invited to address the PAC.

Reminder to PAC members to fill out and return their travel expense claims to Jeanice Tipps at the SWRCB.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 4:15 p.m.